

Survivors recall day they can never forget

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The Los Angeles Times praised the movie Pearl Harbor when it came out.

With the movie's release, many Pearl Harbor veterans are sharing stories about a 'day of infamy' that is not easily forgotten. When talking with these veterans, one can almost feel what they experienced nearly 60 years ago.

It was Dec. 7, 1941 and a quiet Sunday morning until it was jolted by the bombs and torpedoes of the Imperial Japanese Navy when they attacked U.S. Naval and Air Forces. The "day of infamy" plunged the United States into World War II.

The major lessons of Pearl Harbor are about maintaining military vigilance and not miscalculating adversaries. The only way to repay fallen comrades is to ensure that their deaths were not in vain, that they live on forever in spirit by keeping our country strong, prepared and ever vigilant.

The valiant defenders at Pearl Harbor fought with honor, commitment and courage for a country they loved. Sixteen Medals of Honor, 52 Navy Crosses and many more Army and Navy Silver Star medals were awarded for service on that fateful day.

President Roosevelt called the attack "a date which will live in infamy." On Dec. 8, 1941, Franklin Delano Roosevelt addressed a stunned nation:

"Yesterday, Dec. 7, 1941 - a date which will live in infamy - the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan..."

John Finn, of Pine Valley, Calif., received the Medal of Honor for defending Kaneohe Bay Naval Air Station. There were no anti-aircraft weapons—he manned a machine gun-and blasted at Japanese aircraft roaring low overhead as fellow Sailors kept him supplied with ammunition. "We could hear the explosions from Pearl Harbor coming over the mountain," the Medal of Honor recipient recalled. "I told one of my

shipmates, "They're giving the fleet hell." Being wounded more than 20 times, Finn only left his post after being ordered to do so.

Finn's citation signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, stated that "Although painfully wounded many times, he continued to man his gun and to return the enemy's fire vigorously... with complete disregard for his own personal safety."

"One of the pilots looked down and laughed at us," said Pete Schmidt of Toppenish, Wash. Instantaneously, Schmidt found himself running for his life, having to dive under a truck as one of the planes fired on him and just missed hitting his head. He was on duty with the Army at Camp Malahole.

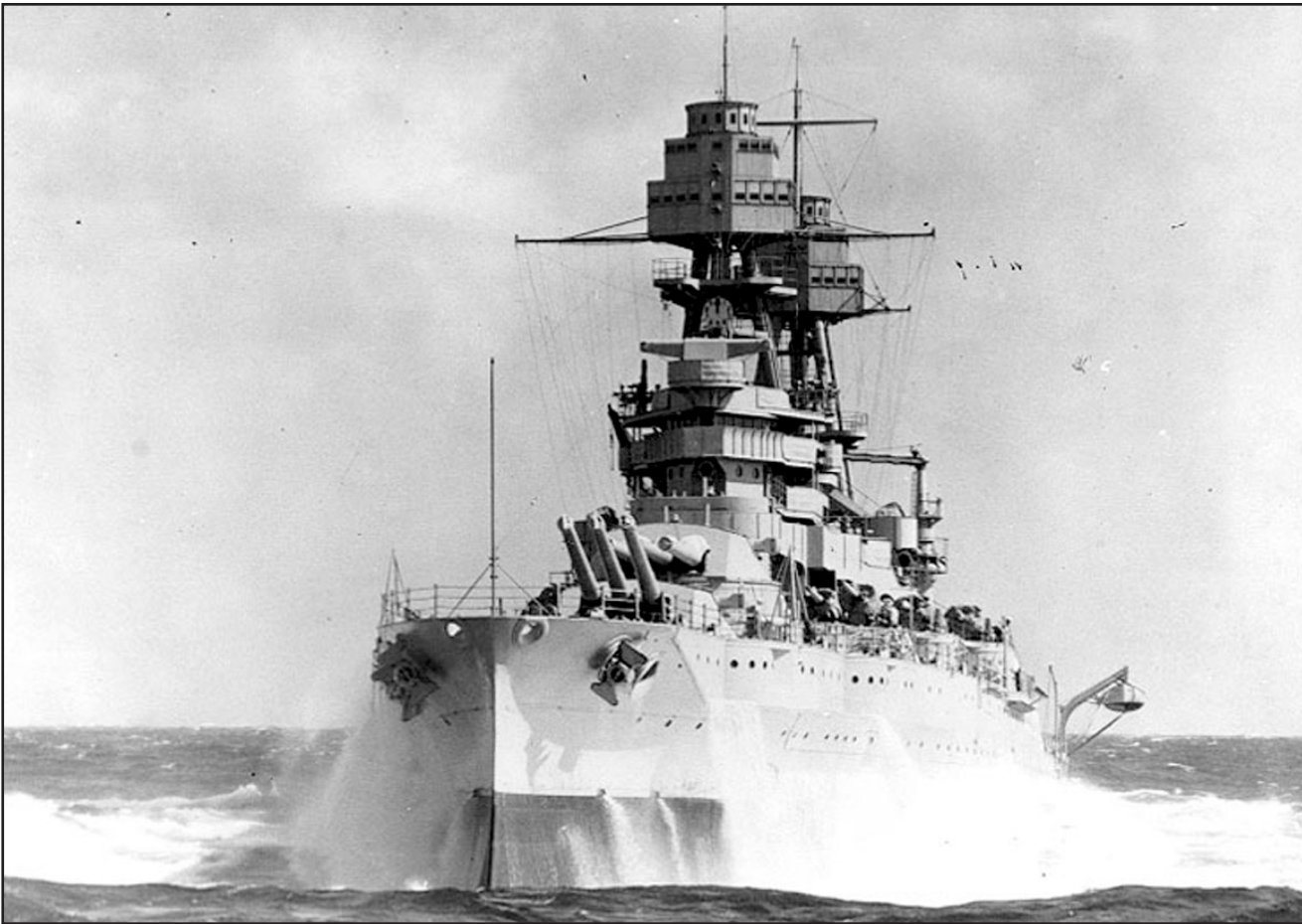
Joseph Novak of San Diego was aboard the destroyer-tender USS Doblin (AD-3). He had just finished breakfast and was sitting on the deck outside of the radio room. "I heard the sound of an aircraft engine, looking over the top of a newspaper, I noted the craft to be flying low, 50 to 75 feet above the

“Eternal vigilance is the price of peace” *Jake Jaekel*

water. After looking again, I saw a large/reddish ball on the side of the plane. A torpedo was attached to the underside of aircraft, immediately I saw it drop from the plane, hit the water then it struck the Utah," he said. "The ship lurched upward. We went to general quarters and engaged the enemy."

William Duffie Clemons Jr., of San Diego, Calif. was a young Marine Corp. Private First Class on duty at Pearl Harbor with the 1st Defense Battalion. He fought Japanese planes with a rifle.

"I grabbed my weapon, my clothes and an ammunition belt," he explained. "We broke out ammunition and set up machine guns and started firing. Those of us who just had rifles fired with them. We kept up the fire as long as the attack lasted. It looked as if each of those bombers was coming right at



Historical Navy photo

USS Arizona (BB 39) out to sea before the attack on Pearl Harbor Dec. 7, 1941.

you felt that every bullet had your name on it, but actually their bombing was not very accurate. After the attack ceased, I reported to headquarters.

"I was on my motorcycle when the second wave came. The most amazing thing wasn't what you saw, but the deafening sounds that accompany at attack. I had no conception of what an actual bombing would be like. The movies couldn't possibly give the intensity of that noise. My ears rang for a week with the sound of falling bombs and explosions. We kept expecting other attacks after the first one and kept jumping

Pearl Harbor will serve to pass that history to future generations. Eternal vigilance is the price of peace," explained, Jake Jaekel of Citrus Heights, Calif. He is the National Secretary of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association. During the attack on Pearl Harbor, he was a young seaman apprentice assigned to the USS Salt Lake City. He was in a motor launch when Japanese torpedoes and bombs found their targets in the U. S. Pacific Fleet. He helped capture a Japanese pilot and turned him over to U.S. Marines.

Charles O. Preece, of Scripps Ranch, witnessed Pearl Harbor

we weren't prepared. We need to teach our nation's young people about Pearl Harbor. It was only fitting that we moved the Battleship Missouri to Pearl Harbor. There, we'll have a memorial of where World War II started and ended." Inouye, was elected in 1962 and is currently serving his sixth term. He graduated from the University of Hawaii in 1950 and from George Washington University in 1952 with a law degree. The senator was at Pearl Harbor when he was 17 years old, and served in the United States Army during World War II.

Writer and author Helen Lou Ross of Port Orchard, Wash. Writes, "Remember Pearl Harbor by supporting a strong deterrent, the military. When the enemy knows the populace of the USA is weak in this particular support, we are subject to attack. It can happen again with more devastating effects than in 1941."

She was a civilian employee of U.S. Army Headquarters on Dec. 7, 1941. Her late husband Donald and she wrote the book "0755 The Heroes of Pearl Harbor." The late Capt. Donald K. Ross, U.S. Navy (Ret.) was one of 16 Medals of Honor recipients from the day of infamy. Ross was cited for valor and valiant devotion to duty during the attack on the battleship Nevada.

Rear Adm. Raymond Burk, U.S. Navy (Retired) of Coronado, Calif, served aboard the battleship early in his Navy career.

"The Arizona was a proud lady and served as the flagship of Battleship Division one. Rear Admiral Chester Nimitz flew his flag aboard, when he was embarked. We slept in hammocks and ate our meals in the same compartments." He added, "She gave life to her crew and her crew gave life to her."

Burk recounted, "I was a midshipman at the Naval Academy when I heard about Pearl Harbor. My fallen shipmates are sleeping forever on that fallen lady. My comments today, is a eulogy for her." He lectures aboard the SS Independence in the Hawaiian Island and offers his eulogy during memorial cruises.

On Dec 7, 1941, for two hours these veterans fought a ferocious enemy, who was trying to destroy their fleet and airplanes. Today, they're a family keeping alive the memory. Their motto is, "Remember Pearl Harbor and Keep America Alert."



Historical Navy photo

Fleet Adm. Chester Nimitz signs the Japanese surrender paperwork Sept. 2, 1945 aboard USS Missouri ending World War II.

Survivors: A day that changed the world forever

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training and practicing ... and when the real thing came we had no ammunition where we needed it."

But this fact saved his life. His gun captain pointed to him and told him to go aft and bring up ammunition from the magazines.

"I remember getting these cases of ammo powder and shells weighing about 90 pounds each," he said. "I had begun lifting shells into the hoist when a deafening roar filled the room and the entire ship shuddered."

The explosion was the ship's forward magazines exploding after a hit by an armor-piercing Japanese bomb. "Only moments before, I stood with my gun

crew just a few feet from the center of the explosion," Phraner said. "My whole gun crew was killed."

Phraner was in the dark, and smoke quickly filled the compartment. He was burned as he climbed up the ladders.

"Getting through that choking kind of smoke was a real ordeal - the kind of smoke that really hurt your lungs," he said. "After awhile, I began to get weak and lightheaded. I could feel myself losing the battle to save my own life. I hung to the ladder, feeling good. I felt that it was all right for me to let go."

But he looked up and saw a speck of light and he kept climbing.

"After what seemed to me like an

eternity, I reached the deck gasping and choking. I lay down for a few moments," he said.

"The warm Hawaiian air filled my lungs and cleared my head. I glanced over to the forward end of the ship to see nothing but a giant wall of flame and smoke. Behind me, a Marine lay dead on the deck, his body split in two. I began to realize there were dead men all around me."

The Arizona was doomed. Phraner abandoned ship, swam to Ford Island and would live to serve on other Navy ships throughout the Pacific War.

The Arizona remains where it sank and its stripped, sunken hull still seeps oil even after 60 years. It is the tomb of many of the 1,177 crewmem-

bers known to have died the attack. The National Park Service operates a hall-like, 184-foot-long memorial building that sweeps over the ship's beam.

Contrary to popular legend, the USS Arizona is no longer in commission. As a special tribute to the ship and its lost crew, however, the Stars and Stripes fly from a flagpole attached to the ship's severed mainmast.

In 1998, another famous battleship docked near the Arizona Memorial, bringing a kind of closure to the Pearl Harbor experience. That fitting symbol was the USS Missouri. The Japanese boarded the Missouri in Tokyo Bay on Sept. 2, 1945, to sign the instruments of surrender.